

13 July 1987

ADDI TALKING POINTS ON HAITI FOR HPSCI

Haiti's ruling council probably can survive the current political crisis as long as its military support remains intact, but opposition vows to boycott elections unless the government resigns could derail the transition to civilian rule. [REDACTED]

25X1

The cause of the month-long crisis was the council's attempt to take control of local and national election preparations away from the independent commission that was mandated by the constitution.

- The military-dominated council's action stemmed from its concern about losing control of the election process to civilians on the commission. [REDACTED]

25X1

Pressured by a general strike and violent protests, the council reversed itself on 2 July and restored full authority to the commission to organize and oversee the elections.

- Despite the council's concessions, many Haitians continue to doubt the government's commitment to democracy because of its apparent willingness to disregard the constitution, approved overwhelmingly in a referendum in March.
- Public outrage over the Army's handling of unrest, in which at least 23 people were killed and over 100 injured, also has undercut the council's attempt to repair its credibility and stabilize the security situation. Most casualties were inflicted by the military, according to US Embassy reports. [REDACTED]

25X1

There are signs, however, that tensions are easing despite continuing demands by some opposition leaders that the council resign.

- Contrary to some press accounts, the US Embassy says the demonstration last Friday in Port-au-Prince did not attract the support hoped for by its organizers. Although Haitian security officials expected 50,000 demonstrators, the Embassy estimates that only 5,000 people took part in the protest.

25X1

-- US officials believe most Haitians now want a return to normalcy. [redacted] 25X1

Nevertheless, the crisis has divided political moderates and some civilian leaders fear the electoral process is in danger, according to the Embassy.

-- Some moderate presidential contenders are counseling dialogue with the government, but others support the extreme position that they will not participate in elections unless the government resigns. [redacted] 25X1

The council, for its part, has vowed to remain in office until the scheduled transfer of power to an elected civilian president next February.

[redacted] 25X1

The transition is being threatened by extremists on the left and right.

[redacted] 25X1

Should violent demonstrations recur, senior military officers might perceive that the Army's integrity and future as an institution are threatened and move to establish an authoritarian regime.

-- Any attempt by the military to establish an authoritarian regime probably would cause prolonged and bloody civil strife. [redacted] 25X1

Page Denied